

UOT 7(4/9)

**Khazar ZEYNALOV**  
*PhD (Art Study), Associate Professor*  
*Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS*  
*(Azerbaijan)*  
*khazar.zeynalov@yandex.com*

---

## AZERBAIJANI AND RUSSIAN ARTISTIC RELATIONS IN THE FIELD OF SCULPTURE: HISTORY AND MODERNITY

**abstract.** The article deals with the history of Azerbaijani and Russian artistic relations in the field of plastic art. An interesting aspect of the research methodology is that the author covers two very different periods – the beginning and the modern and connected them with each other. The great path of development passed by the Azerbaijan National School of Sculpture is clearly evident as a result of comparing these two completely different periods. The beginning period dates back to the 1920s, famous sculptors from Russia and other regions were invited to Azerbaijan at that time. Among them were S.D.Erzya, P.V.Sabsay, R.S.Tripolskaya and others. They taught at institutes and art colleges and took an active part in the cultural life of the republic. At that time, there was few national staff. These sculptors had a significant influence on the development of the art of sculpture in the republic. A completely different view can be observed in the modern period of plastic arts in Azerbaijan. Today, monuments by talented Azerbaijani sculptors have been erected in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other Russian cities.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijani and Russian mutual cultural relations, sculpture, Stepan Dmitriyevich Erzya, Pyotr Vladimirovich Sabsay, Natig Aliyev

**Introduction.** Specialists invited from Russia had certain works in the development of plastic arts in Azerbaijan at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially since the 20s. These specialists laid the foundation stones of plastic art in Azerbaijan. When we talk about these specialists and their work, first of all we should talk about S.D. Erzya, P.V. Pabsay, Y.I. Keylikhis and R.S. Tripolskaya. These sculptors, who came to Azerbaijan mainly at the beginning of the century and in the 20s, lived and worked here at different stages. Except

S.D. Erzya, all of them connected their destiny with Azerbaijan, lived until the end of their lives and died here. They took active part in artistic processes in the early stages of the national art and education of sculpture.

**The interpretation of the main material.** Erzya's special services were among the invited artists. Well-known Russian sculptor Erzyan (S.D. Nefedov) had made significant contributions to the development of monumental and easel plastic arts in Azerbaijan. Erzya worked in Baku during 1923–25, taught at the School of Art and took active part in the establishment of the sculpture department in the same school with P.V. Sabsay and Y.I. Keylikhis (Keylikhis worked at the Industrial Institute).

The first Azerbaijani female sculptor, Ziver Najafgulu gizi Mammadova, who studied in the sculpture department of the art school in those years, had an internship in Erzya's and Sabsay's workshops and learned the professional secrets of plastic arts from them. Z.Mammadova, who matured as an artist, created expressive bust portraits of Azim Azimzadeh, Huseyngulu Sarabski, Mashadi Azizbeyov, hero of the Soviet Union Huseyn Aliyev and others in the 30s and 40s. Erzya also worked creatively and created a series of Baku oil workers' characters (1924) while he taught in Baku. This group of monuments, once erected on the frontons and cornices of the Central House of the Miners' Union in Baku, is considered as Erzyan's main works in Azerbaijan.

Erzyan's multifaceted artistic activity was comprehensively studied in Russian Soviet study of art in the 50s and 70s and albums and monographs reflecting his works were published. Interestingly, the short period of Baku stage of Erzyan's life, who was an experienced pedagogue and artist, wasn't left out of consideration. V. Trofimov published a monograph covering the Baku period of Erzyan's life and works in 1977 [3].

P.V.Sabsay came to Baku in 1926 and first worked in the field of easel plastics. Sabsay's pedagogical activity in Baku began at this time.

P.V.Sabsay's first monumental work in Baku is the monument to M.F.Akhundov erected in Baku in 1930. The monument wasn't so successful in terms of superficial resemblance and the unoriginal pose. But in any case, it is noteworthy as it was the first large-scale work of a young, inexperienced sculptor at that time. Also, this monument is the only monumental work of Sabsay that has survived to the present day. Other known monumental works created by him – monuments reflecting Soviet ideology no longer adorn the city today.

Sabsay's interesting plastic works are kept in the Museum of Art named after R.Mustafayev. Among them are "Oil worker M.P. Kaverochkin" (marble,

1955), “Artist S. Bahlulzadeh” (wood, 1963), “Oil worker G. Babayev” (wood, 1967) and other portraits.

There are also Sabsay’s busts kept in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. These monuments are a living manifestation of Azerbaijani and Russian cultural relations. At the same time, the relationship manifests itself at different levels and in parallels. In our opinion, it is possible to distinguish at least two levels here:

- Demonstration of Azerbaijani literary appearance by Azerbaijani sculptor in Moscow;
- Demonstration of the Russian literary appearance by Azerbaijani sculptor in Moscow.

The abovementioned comparative parallels show that Sabsay’s work in the Tretyakov Gallery is, so to speak, “bilateral” in Azerbaijani and Russian relations.

Of course, it is possible to talk about cultural relations in Sabsay’s works in more detail. But, in our opinion, it is more advisable to conduct the investigation and comparison around two of his works kept in the Tretyakov Gallery. Because in this case, the character of the existing relationships is realized through two similar artistic appearance and there is no need for unnecessary enumeration. These are busts of the immortal Russian poet A.S. Pushkin and the prominent Azerbaijani writer S.Rahimov. There is a certain closeness and connection between the two character and these works have a more appropriate effect as an object of comparison. Both of these busts reflect the character of literary men. In addition, Sabsay created both works in 1961.

P.V. Sabsay’s pedagogical activity is also of great interest. He took active part in the establishment of a sculpture department at the Azerbaijan School of Art in 1940 and he headed that department for more than twenty years (until the early 60s) [2, p. 14].

It is necessary to mention another artist – a female sculptor who contributed to the development of Azerbaijani sculpture in the 20s. She is Y.R.Tripolskaya, who worked in Baku for some time.

Tripolskaya was born in Poltava, Ukraine and studied sculpture in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Paris. Her creation is associated not only with Ukraine, but also with Russia, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

The Baku stage of Tripolskaya’s sculptural activity is divided into two periods. These are the 1920s and the mature periods of the artist’s creation.

While Tripolskaya worked in Baku in the 1920s, she encountered various tendencies of neoconstructivism in architecture. It became fashionable, so to speak, to decorate the facades, belvederes and frontons of buildings with architectural ensembles in those years. The interiors of public buildings were also decorated with luxurious sculptural groups (in the form of sculpture or circles). As a rule, character of workers, peasants, as well as sportsmen were created; youth themes were also popular. Tripolskaya's early works (in the 20s) reflected this tradition. Unfortunately, many of these monuments haven't survived today.

E.R.Tripolskaya also created monumental works. Many of them serve Soviet ideology. But, Tripolskaya had works that reflect absolute the Azerbaijani culture, our true national and spiritual values. Today, the most important of them is the monument of Khurshudbanu Natavan located in the lodge of the National Museum of the History of Literature named after Nizami Ganjavi. This monument is one of Tripolskaya's most successful works and reflects the second, mature stage of her creation of the Baku period.

It would be interesting to talk about another artist who worked in Baku in the 20s and 30s of the last century – Honored Art Worker of Azerbaijan Y.I. Keylikhis. His arrival in Baku coincided with 1908. This period was characterized by the strong development of the national culture of Azerbaijan on an enlightened and democratic basis. Our first national opera "Leyli and Majnun" was presented to the public in the same year. There were enough rich conditions for Keylikhis to have a say in the cultural life of Baku in such circumstances. Y.I.Keylixis's sculptural activities were of a professional character. He studied sculpture first at the Odessa School of Art and later improved his art in St. Petersburg and abroad (mainly in Florence).

Keylikhis worked actively as pedagogue in Baku before the revolution and he established a private sculpture studio here in 1909. Remember that artists such as Samorodov and Edel also established creative workshops in Baku in those years. Of course, Keylikhis's activities didn't arrest attention very much at that time. But, it is gratifying that Keylikhis's works were absolutely national even before the revolution. He created the famous Azerbaijani intellectual Sh. Mahmudbeyov' bas-relief and worked on a number of characters ("Porter", etc.) on the national theme. These works, which are mainly easel art, were the first works by a professionally educated sculptor in Azerbaijan.

Keylikhis was also the author of Karl Marx's bust erected in 1920 in the center of Baku – now Fountain Square. But, his main monumental work is

our immortal poet M.A.Sabir's monument erected in 1922 in Baku. This monument was the first monumental statue in the Eastern world and reflected the leading role of Azerbaijani art culture.

Nearly a century has passed since then. Independent Azerbaijan is a full member of the world community today. Russian sculptors contributed to the development of Azerbaijani sculpture art formerly. Azerbaijani sculptors' works adorn Russian cities today. This trend, which was formed in the 60s and 70s of the last century, entered a new, more perfect stage of its development during the years of independence.

From this point of view, People's Artist, Professor Natig Aliyev's creation is noteworthy. It is interesting that the Azerbaijani sculptor has sincere artistic relations with the mayoralty's office of Astrakhan. He is author of monuments erected in this city. One of them revives the Great Russian prince Vladimir's personality (approximately 960–1015) (2013). It is known that this prince played a great role in strengthening the Russian state. He is also one of the initiators of the spread of Christianity in the Russian state. Using this historical information, N.Aliyev tried to reflect them in the composition. The composition of the monument is based on Prince Vladimir's monumental character on a granite pedestal. He held a cross on a long stake on the ground in his left hand, and raised his right hand in the form of a summons and extended it forward. He held a long stake with a cross in his hand, raised his right hand in the form of call and stretched it forward. This interesting plastic form enhances the grandeur of the character by informing the personal qualities of the character, the experience of state administration [4].

Another work by N.Aliyev is dedicated to Baku and Astrakhan friendship. The work has an interesting compositional solution. There is no character of any person. There are relief and protruding architectural forms on the monument. Its composition is based on a granite platform divided into two parts from a common body. One of these details symbolizes Baku and the other the land of Astrakhan. The main historical and architectural monuments of our city – Maiden Tower, ancient mosques and minarets are reflected on the part symbolizing Baku. This part occupies the left half of the monument. The right half of the monument reflects the historical and architectural monuments of Astrakhan. There is a view of the Astrakhan Kremlin, towers and churches. The dynamic reliefs of camel caravans are shown on the bottom of the Baku part and horsemen on the Astrakhan side. These two city places divide the monument into two equal parts, as if they

balance the composition. In general, the monument has a very interesting, unique compositional structure and creates a rich artistic and aesthetic impression on the audience.

The pedestal of the monument has a simple but well-groomed appearance. The pedestal, which covered with gray and blue marble tiles, has a rectangular shape that expands downwards. The words “Baku and Astrakhan Friendship Monument” are written on a bronze flag-shaped board on the pedestal.

The incarnation of Azerbaijani and Russian cultural relations by monumental means was more widely embodied during the years of independence. There is no doubt that this aspect is one of the main achievements of the purposeful foreign policy of our state in the field of culture.

There are magnificent monuments reflecting Azerbaijani art in many regions of Russia. The great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi's character is more interesting among these monuments.

Nizami Ganjavi's magnificent monuments are erected in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Both monuments were made by Azerbaijani sculptors and presented to these two major Russian cities. The monuments attract attention with their individuality, interesting structure and poeticity.

The poet's monument in Moscow is erected in front of our country's embassy in Russia. The monument is correctly connected with the architectural and city peculiarities of the area. The multifaceted character of the composition is enriched with interesting artistic details. The monument was erected in 1991 and is a gift of Azerbaijan to Moscow. Its authors are T.Zeynalov and E.Zeynalov.

The monument of Nizami in St. Petersburg also attracts attention for its unique compositional solution (2002). The sculptor Gorush Babayev described the character of the immortal poet in a sitting position, which is a relatively new structure for the monumental Nizami monuments. It is interesting that G.Babayev studied in Leningrad, in the Department of Monumental Sculpture of the Academy of Arts and even wanted to stay there for a while. G. Babayev says about this: “It is good that I didn't stay in Leningrad at that time. If so, I wouldn't be an Azerbaijani artist completely. Azerbaijanism wouldn't be felt so much in my works...” [1, p.8].

Nizami's character is decorated with surrounding details and thus an interesting, rich composition is formed. From this point of view, the work resembles somewhat the composition of Huseyn Javid's monument in Baku. The pedestal of Nizami's monument is also well-designed, connected

ideologically and aesthetically with both the environment and the upper part of the composition.

Conclusion. Today Azerbaijani and Russian cultural relations are developing faster. This relationship shows itself even more in the field of sculpture. If specialists invited from Russia took an active part in the development of the art of sculpture in the early 20th century, then their work took a back seat due to the formation of national stuff. The works of Azerbaijani sculptors have been erected in many countries around the world, including Russia in modern times. These works are related not only to Azerbaijan, but also to the history and culture of Russia in terms of theme. This shows the high development of Azerbaijani sculpture, as well as the growing development of Azerbaijani and Russian cultural and friendly relations in modern times.

#### **rEFERENCE:**

1. Azəri L. Səmaya boyلانan rənglər // “Mədəniyyət”, 28 fevral 2014-cü il, s. 8.
2. Веймарн Б.В. Петр Владимирович Сабсай. Москва, Изобразительное искусство, 1979, 23 с. без илл.
3. Трофимов В. Эрьзя (бакинский период творчества). Баку, Азернешр, 1977.
4. <http://narimanov-ih.gov.az/news/396.html>

#### **Xəzər Zeynalov (Azərbaycan)**

#### **Heykəltəraşlıq sahəsində Azərbaycan-rus bədii əlaqələri: tarix və müasirlik**

Məqalədə plastik incəsənət sahəsində Azərbaycan-rus bədii əlaqələr tarixindən danışılır. Tədqiqatın metodologiyasının maraq doğuran cəhəti bundan ibarətdir ki, müəllif bir-birindən kəskin fərqlənən iki dövrü – başlanğıc və müasir dövrləri əhatə etmiş, onları bir-biri ilə əlaqələndirmişdir. Məhz bu iki tamamilə fərqli dövrlərin müqayisəsi nəticəsində Azərbaycan milli heykəltəraşlıq məktəbi tərəfindən keçilən böyük inkişaf yolu aydın şəkildə özünü bürüzə verir. Başlanğıc dövrü ötən əsrin 20-ci illərinə təsadüf edir ki, həmin dövrdə Azərbaycanda Rusiya və digər bölgələrdən dəvət edilmiş tanınmış heykəltəraşlar fəaliyyət göstərirdilər. Onların arasında S.D.Erzya, P.V.Sabsay, R.S.Tripolskaya və başqaları vardı. Onlar institutlarda və rəssamlıq texnikumunda dərs deyir, respublikanın mədəni həyatında aktiv iş-

tirak edirdilər. O dövrdə milli kadr az idi. Bu sənətkarlar respublikada yapma sənətinin inkişafına əhəmiyyətli təsir göstərmışdır. Azərbaycanda plastik sənətlərin böyük inkişaf yolu keçdiyi müasir dövrdə tamam fərqli mənzərəni müşahidə etmək olar. Bu gün Rusyanın Moskva, Sankt-Peterburq və başqa şəhərlərində istedadlı Azərbaycan heykəltəraşlarının müəllifi olduğu abidələr qoyulmuşdur.

**Açar sözlər:** Azərbaycan-rus qarşılıqlı mədəni əlaqələri, heykəltəraşlıq, Stepan Dmitriyeviç Erzya, Pyotr Vladimiroviç Sabsay, Natiq Əliyev

### **Хазар Зейналов (Азербайджан)**

#### **Азербайджано-русские художественные связи в области скульптуры: история и современность**

В статье говорится об истории азербайджано-русских художественных связей в области пластического искусства. Интересной особенностью методологии исследования является то, что автор охватывает два противоположных периода – начальный и современный, сопоставляя их между собой. Именно в сравнении этих двух совершенно разных периодов наглядно проявляется большой путь развития, пройденной национальной скульптурной школой Азербайджана. Начальный период – это 20-е годы прошлого столетия, когда в Азербайджане работали известные скульпторы, приглашенные из России и других регионов. В их числе находились известные ваятели – С.Д.Эрзя, П.В.Сабсай, Р.С.Трипольская и другие. Они преподавали в Институтах и в художественном техникуме, принимали активное участие в культурной жизни республики. В то время национальных кадров было мало. Эти мастера внесли существенный вклад в развитие искусства ваяния в республике. Совсем другую картину можно наблюдать в современный период, когда искусство пластики уже давно достигло большого развития в Азербайджане. Сегодня в Москве, Санкт-Петербурге и других городах России установлены памятники, авторами которых являются талантливые скульпторы Азербайджана.

**Ключевые слова:** Азербайджано-русские культурные взаимосвязи, скульптура, Степан Дмитриевич Эрзя, Петр Владимирович Сабсай, Натик Алиев